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Explaining the CIA

Answering the questions of newsmen on "Meet The Press," Admiral Raborn, recently retired as head of the Central Intelligence Agency, made a good case for its policy and operations.

Declining to give exact figures for security reasons, he made it plain that the chief function of the CIA is the gathering, analysis and evaluation of all available information, often from open sources such as radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines and books. Monitoring the world's air waves and the world's press is a gigantic task in itself. Comparing the bits and pieces of useful information, and collating them with the reports of political and military attaches in our embassies abroad, on a day-to-day basis, requires the employment of hundreds of experts.

The admiral made it plain that the cloak-and-dagger aspect of covert operations was, by contrast, only a minor mission of the CIA. The agency does not, he said flatly, act independently or make policy. Whatever it does has the ap-

proval of duly constituted authority in the National Security Council, and, as required by law, is subject to the surveillance of a joint watchdog committee of Congress.

In nearly twenty years, the CIA has established a reputation for professional competence and dedication. Necessarily, its policy of secrecy bars its staff from defending the agency against idle rumors and melodramatic inventions, often launched by foreign rivals. It was thoroughly investigated by a blue-ribbon commission after the Bay of Pigs in 1961, and the probe led to some internal reform. But on the whole the concept of a unified intelligence agency has proved its worth. No one now would wish to return to the haphazard competition in this field which obtained during World War II, when Army, Navy, Army Air Force, State, OWI, OSS, the Board of Economic Warfare and the Office of Inter-American Affairs, not to mention the Federal Communications Commission, all had to run separate information-gathering enterprises.